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Daily Summary of Public Positions on INF

West European media yesterday highlighted statements by President Reagan and Ambassador Nitze on US willingness to consider Soviet proposals at Geneva. Moscow chastised Bonn for its stance on the zero option and pointed to the recent comments of CSU leader Strauss as evidence of differences on INF policy within the Kohl government.

UK

The Daily Telegraph reported yesterday that leading Conservative back-benchers told Defense Secretary Heseltine that the government must insist on dual key because constituents are angry that the decision to fire the new missiles lies solely in the hands of the US. The Times quoted Foreign Secretary Pym as saying that "a compromise agreement might have to be sought if the Russians continue to reject President Reagan's zero option." However, he echoed Thatcher's comment that any intermediate agreement must be "balanced." Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie yesterday announced his support for the campaign against nuclear weapons.

Germany

After his meeting with Nitze, Defense Minister Woerner told reporters that "he has no doubt that the US position is flexible enough to result in a compromise." Vogel, in an interview published yesterday, reiterated that the Soviet proposals on INF include some positive elements and that the US should and will come forward with a counterproposal. He also maintained that US and Soviet negotiators must somehow consider French and British nuclear weapons, although these systems cannot be part of an agreement. Vogel noted that CSU leader Strauss "has become one of the sharpest critics of the zero option, putting himself 180 degrees from Kohl's position." On the Vice President's trip, the independent Der Tagesspiegel observed Tuesday that "Bush is particularly suitable because right from the beginning he did not take part in the easy talk about the possibility of an atomic war in Europe, the desirability of neutron weapons, etc." The paper also observed, "It is known in Washington that Bush does not think too highly of the White House earmarking \$65 million for explaining President Reagan's policy to the Europeans."

France

Recent press articles show that Gaullist leader Chirac, Republican Party (Giscardian) chief Leotard and Social Democratic (centrist) president Mehaignerie approved of Mitterrand's Bundestag speech. One respected military affairs commentator in Le Monde attacked critics of Mitterrand's speech--including a former top adviser to Giscard--arguing that they stir up fears of West German "militarism" while underrating the real dangers of Soviet missiles.

Italy

The media focused on President Reagan's State of the Union address, the consensus being that the President was willing to move away from the zero option ("Reagan Requests a Balanced Treaty"--"Reagan Invites the USSR To Make Concrete Gestures--"The President is More Flexible"). The conservative Il Tempo declared that uncertainty over Soviet willingness to make concessions is much more of an obstacle to agreement than American defense of the zero option. PCI paper l'Unita quotes Nitze's statement about the US not being tied to the zero option.

USSR

TASS yesterday accused Bonn of currying favor with the US by supporting the zero option. The piece contrasted the government's position with the stance of SPD leaders and claimed that Strauss' comments underscored dissension within the Kohl government.

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Italy

The Italian press is beginning to emphasize the need for quick agreement in Geneva and continues to highlight flexibility as the key to success. The centrist newspaper Corriere Della Sera notes that without immediate results, the USSR must either become tougher or run the risk of negotiating after the Pershing II is deployed. The Socialist paper Avanti declared that "time is of the essence" and that "it is necessary to submit an honest proposal to the Soviets that could bring about an agreement" to quell West European fears of nuclear war and to counter Soviet propaganda. [redacted]

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Netherlands

De Volkskrant, in a recent editorial, cited US policy as the "main cause" behind the European peace movement and claimed that the zero option was forced on Western Europe by Washington. The editorial concluded that NATO is not suffering from a public relations crisis but from bad political management. [redacted]

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Belgium

Ambassador Price reports that Foreign Minister Tindemans was delighted that the European Repair Facility for GLCMs will be sited in Belgium, noting that "this will be very helpful, very helpful." Tindemans argued that NATO should stick with the zero option, so far as the Allies goal for the INF talks at Geneva is concerned. He said that any move off that position will open an avenue for an avalanche of so-called "compromise" and "necessary concessions." Tindemans emphasized to Price later that to maintain credibility it would be essential that consultation with the allies take place prior to any US shift from the zero option, even if the shift is to a step-by-step approach that retains the option as an ultimate goal. [redacted]

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USSR

An unsigned editorial in yesterday's Soviet Russia reiterates General Secretary Andropov's December proposal to dismantle hundreds of Soviet missiles, "including more than one dozen SS-20s." The paper also criticized the "latest statements from the Reagan Administration," as indicating that the US still clings to the zero option. [redacted]
Comment: Soviet press spokesmen this past month have argued that the pendulum of public opinion in Western Europe and in the US has perceptibly swung to the left. Soviet press commentaries can be expected to continue their harsh line. [redacted]

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